

Field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)



Fern/
Fern Ally



Slender green branches at acute angles

Field horsetail is a perennial fern ally, toxic to livestock, which grows up to 80 cm tall and dies down in winter. It prefers damp open ground, especially along stream and riverbanks, and is grown in gardens for its reputed medicinal properties.

Its extensive underground rhizome system produces fertile and infertile stems. The infertile stems look like small pine seedlings, with whorls of slender green branches at acute angles. The leaf sheath has black teeth. Fertile stems are brown and unbranched, with small spore-bearing 'cones' at the top.

Field horsetail propagates itself by rhizomes and by small, ovoid tubers. Control is extremely difficult. Chemical control varies in its effectiveness. Weed mat, maintained over a long period of time, may give some benefit.

Field horsetail is of limited distribution in New Zealand. Any suspected new infestations should be reported to your Regional Council.